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Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers halts work at Amelia Earhart Park

Jacksonville, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has interrupted work on an environmental restoration project at Amelia Earhart Park in Opa Locka after discovering ordnance items on site late yesterday.

The site in question is a former landfill for the former naval air station, and contains numerous buried drums of metal wastes as well as general construction debris. The Corps was working to remove hazardous waste soils at the project site under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites (DERP-FUDS) when a suspected ordnance item was found. Work was halted immediately until the Miami-Dade bomb squad recovered and removed the item, which was later identified as scrap with no explosive contents.

Following the removal of the scrap ordnance, further inspection revealed approximately six to eight additional ordnance pieces and one intact casing. Department of Defense explosives specialists have been called to the site for identification and appropriate disposal of the items.

Work is suspended on the site, except for backfill of other excavated pits away from the pit that contains the ordnance items. To ensure public safety, the Corps has advised the local Parks and Recreation Department to restrict access to the immediate section of the park containing the items to visitor activities until further investigation and disposal is accomplished. Other areas of the park may remain open at the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Department.

“Safety is our highest priority,” said Jacksonville District DERP-FUDS manager Michael Ornella. “There is no immediate danger, and we are coordinating with local law enforcement officials, Corps explosives experts and our contractor to ensure that public access is restricted until these items are safely and properly removed from the site.”

It is uncertain how much time will be needed to dispose of the ordnance items so that the hazardous waste removal work may resume. “Finding and identifying these munitions, and taking immediate action to dispose of them while ensuring the safety of the public and our crews, is indicative of the thorough and careful job being done by the Corps and our contractors in the cleanup at Amelia Earhart Park,” added Ornella.

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